

BOARD OF REGISTERED NURSING

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Ruth Ann Terry, MPH, RN, Executive Officer



SCHOOL NURSE FUNCTION

The Board of Registered Nursing has received inquiries regarding the function of a school nurse with school children who require specialized physical health care services. Of particular concern is the role of the school nurse supervising a non-licensed person to administer specialized physical health care to a child with exceptional needs in the school such as urinary (bladder) catheterization or tracheal suctioning.

Section 49423.5 of the Education Code (EC) states that any student with exceptional needs who requires specialized physical care may be assisted by a credentialed school nurse or certified public health nurse or qualified designated school personnel, i.e., teacher or instructional aide, provided the latter performs the services under the supervision of a school nurse, public health nurse, or licensed physician and surgeon.

On the other hand, the Business & Professions Code (B&PC), Section 2725, referred to as the Nursing Practice Act, does not give the authority to registered nurses to delegate nursing tasks and functions which require substantial knowledge and skill to non-licensed persons.

In consideration of the two statutes, EC and B&PC, the Board has declared that the authority of the nurse with regard to the EC is to supervise and not to delegate. The following definition of a supervisor adopted by the Department of Education Health Needs Task Force and accepted by the Board of Registered Nursing and the Department of Education is as follows:

“Supervisor means a qualified school nurse, qualified public health nurse or qualified licensed physician and surgeon who is qualified to perform the procedure. The supervisor shall have the privilege to exercise judgment and specify the level of supervision required, based on professional judgment and shall so advise the individualized education program team.”

The authority for non-licensed, designated school person(s) who provide specialized health care services is conferred by the EC and not the license of the nurse or physician.”

In summary, a certified school nurse or public health nurse when functioning in the school setting may supervise trained qualified designated personnel to administer specialized care to a student with exceptional needs. The Department of Education is authorized by law to administer these provisions and continues to clarify terms, and refine policies and procedures related to delivery of specialized care to school children. Further inquiries should be addressed to:

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